

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 145 792

HE 009 388

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 TITLE The Haven Function of Colleges and Universities.
 PUB DATE 56
 NOTE 7p.; Address presented in a colloquium on The Intellectual and the Challenge of His Culture (University of California, January 1956)

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS *Authors; *Creativity; Financial Support; Futures (of Society); *Higher Education; *Institutional Environment; *Institutional Role; *Literary History; Social Responsibility; Social Values; World History

ABSTRACT

A growing proportion of the producers of American belles-lettres belong to the academic guild. The private patrons of writers of earlier periods have few counterparts today, and colleges and universities have taken over and enlarged the function they performed: to give writers both the wherewithal for living and a habitat, thus performing a haven function. These institutions are performing this function more effectively and successfully than any institutions in man's history. At the same time they are more completely serving the needs of the nation and a constantly growing proportion of its citizens. Such multifunctional activities cause exasperating conflicts, but the structural flexibility to resolve them exists. (MTE)

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THE HAVEN FUNCTION OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES*

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During recent years a number of articles have appeared in professional journals and in the glossy magazines discussing what I have come to call "the haven function" of colleges and universities. They canvass the implications of the apparent fact that American dramatists, essayists, writers of fiction, poets, and other "creative writers" increasingly hold academic posts. I say "apparent fact" because over a long period some of the nation's leading literary men have been faculty members. During the nineteenth century Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and James Russell Lowell all held Harvard professorships; and during the early decades of this century Robert Hillyer and William Vaughan Moody were Chicago professors of English, Leonard Bacon taught here at Berkeley, and Van Wyck Brooks held forth briefly as a member of the English Department at Stanford.

It seems to be true, however, that a growing proportion of the producers of American belles-lettres belong to the academic guild. About a third of the winners of the Pulitzer Prize in poetry since its establishment in 1922 have been or are professors. The names of academic people also seem to be appearing more frequently among the winners of other literary honors not only in poetry but also in fiction, drama, and biography. Meanwhile professorships in "creative writing" have been widely established, and these in particular have stimulated the discussions in the journals and magazines. The private patrons of earlier periods have few counterparts today, and colleges and universities have taken over and enlarged the function they performed: they not only give writers the wherewithal of living but also a habitat. In short, they are performing "the haven function."

For natural and social scientists higher educational institutions have been performing this function for what seems like such a long time that everyone takes it for granted. Indeed, the place in colleges and universities of these workers is so thoroughly established that it may appear to be somewhat inept to attribute their presence to the haven function. And yet both groups have only recently attained their present status. From the time that Newton resigned his Cambridge professorship in 1701 to 1871 when Clark Maxwell became professor of experimental physics there, Oxford and Cambridge included among their professors not a single leading British natural scientist; and in the social sciences the same situation prevailed. Adam Smith for a period held a professorship at the University of Glasgow; but Bentham,

*Notes of an address given in the Colloquium on The Intellectual and the Challenge of His Culture, the University of California, January 17, 1956.

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Malthus, the two Mills, Ricardo, Spencer, and the other great early and mid-nineteenth century students of society did not have academic positions. It seems highly probable that Alfred Marshall, together with many of his contemporaries and successors, would also have been outside the academic fold had it not been for the reforms brought about in Oxford and Cambridge by the Royal Commissions appointed in 1850 and 1871.

The German and the Dutch universities, as I shall describe later, welcomed the students of nature and of society considerably earlier than the English, but in the United States we too remained laggard. Isaac Greenwood and John Winthrop did experimental work in physics at Harvard in the eighteenth century, and in the early nineteenth John Maclean and Benjamin Silliman introduced the academic teaching of chemistry at Princeton and Yale. Most of the reigning professors of the classical languages, however, looked askance at the natural sciences believing, it would appear, that they got all the attention they needed in the still extant medieval subject of natural philosophy.

The classicists felt more kindly toward the social sciences which since the thirteenth century had been taught under the label of moral philosophy. The flood of new knowledge, especially from the German universities, however, made sub-divisions inevitable; and two or three professorships of history emerged before the Civil War. Then in 1871 Harvard appointed the nation's first professor of political economy, in 1881 Cornell the first professor of American history, in 1892 Columbia and Chicago the first two professors of sociology. Soon thereafter political science broke off from political economy, psychology from philosophy, and anthropology from its several progenitors. Not until well into the present century, however, did the social sciences achieve recognition as essential and respectable academic subjects.

In this paper I shall be citing the haven function of colleges and universities especially as it affects the social sciences. By the haven function I mean the harboring of individuals whose activities as independent workers would not bring them enough income to support themselves and their dependents. Otherwise expressed, colleges and universities perform the haven function for those members of their faculties whose products, were they self-employed, would have market values below the subsistence level.

Should higher educational institutions suddenly disappear from American life, probably those who teach the applied subjects would have little difficulty continuing their work under other auspices; but what would happen to those concerned with theory and to those who teach such subjects as art, history, literature, and philosophy? Probably they would either be absorbed by other social institutions which would thereby take over some of the historic functions of universities, or they would earn their livings in other activities. It would be invidious to query which members of a faculty are haven-function people and which not, but I know that I am among those who are. No institution other than the university has any interest in my subject and, further, the combined fees of the students who take my courses

do not approach the total of my salary. If American colleges and universities operated under the ancient fee system -- and some of them did until toward the end of the last century -- I couldn't be a professor, and the same would be true of many others. In short, quite a few of us are able to do what we are doing only because colleges and universities honor the haven function.

If this be true, it would seem to follow that the beneficiaries of the function should have rather more knowledge than most of them seem to have of the institution which gives them shelter. I understand that I have been invited to participate in this colloquium because a review of the history of higher education which I gave last summer at the Behavioral Center overlooking Stanford led several of its University of California fellows to the conclusion that they know too little about the backgrounds of the institution which fosters their work, in whose orbit they spend their lives, and whose policies they help substantially to shape. Be that as it may, this afternoon I shall sketch the twenty-three and a half centuries of higher education in the Western World with emphasis upon the social sciences and also upon the evolution of American universities.

- 2 -

Perhaps some of you have raised your eyebrows at my phrase "twenty-three and a half centuries of higher education in the Western World." So many historians have written that European universities began in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and have also declared that the higher educational institutions existing in the ancient world were not universities that everyone seems to have concluded that European higher education began with the emergence of the University of Bologna about 1150. The facts, however, are that, first, present-day universities are structurally the direct descendants of the universities that sprang up in Italy, France, and England in the late Middle Ages but, second, they perform the same functions as those carried on by the Hellenic and Hellenistic institutions which flourished in the ancient world and by the Byzantine and Moslem institutions which antedated by several centuries the universities of Western Europe. Further, the Hellenic and Byzantine institutions accented the social sciences and, indeed, put more stress upon them than these subjects have again until the twentieth century. In short, the roots of the social sciences go back to the Academy of Plato and to the Lyceum of Aristotle and not to the universities of medieval Europe which, except for legal studies, largely neglected them. Let me try to support this statement by reviewing the organization and activities of the higher educational structures that antedated European universities.

During the fourth century B.C. four higher institutions which would have extended histories came into existence, and one of them continued in operation for almost a thousand years. They were Plato's Academy, Aristotle's Lyceum, the Stoa of the Stoics, and the Gardens of the Epicureans.

They went by the generic name of museums, homes of the muses, the patronesses of learning; but today we would call them universities. I shall chiefly describe the Academy which functioned from its founding in 387 B.C. until its destruction by Justinian in 529 A.D. -- a total of 916 years. It had many of the characteristics of the modern university.

As observed earlier the Academy and its sister museums put stress upon the social sciences. Thus Plato wrote The Republic and The Laws and Aristotle produced his Politics, Constitution of Athens, Customs of Barbarians, and several other social science treatises. Indeed, above all else Plato and Aristotle were concerned with the nature of the good society; and though they ranged over the whole field of knowledge, they began and ended in social science.

After the Macedonians destroyed the Greek city states and ended the Hellenic period, the museums of Alexander, Antioch, Pergamum, and Rhodes took over the intellectual leadership of the succeeding Hellenistic period. Of these the most important seems to have been the Alexandrian Museum which the first of the Ptolemies founded in 306 B.C. and which continued in existence until 642 A.D., that is 948 years. This fabulous institution waned after the beginning of the Christian era, but during its heyday it reached heights that wouldn't be achieved again until the nineteenth century. I cannot discover that its professors did anything of consequence in the social sciences, but consider some of its achievements in the physical and literary sciences.

- 3 -

The Alexandrian Museum had become so weak by the time the Moslems triumphed in the Eastern Mediterranean that they allowed it to die, but meanwhile higher educational institutions had been established in Constantinople. Soon the Moslems themselves were to build great centers of learning called madaris in many of their cities from Baghdad to Seville. These Byzantine and Moslem structures came upon the scene long before the universities of Western Europe, and they deserve more attention than historians have given them. I describe briefly what I have been able to learn about them from the sparse literature available.

- 4 -

The Medieval University

[What follows is in outline form]

Universities began to appear in Western Europe for a variety of reasons including:

New subjects, new methods, new corporate spirit

Chief distinction from the Academy, etc.: the corporate faculty

The Corporate Faculty:

1. Two types of medieval universities: Italian, French, Name: studium generale.
2. Dominance of the French plan and hence of problems of academic government today

New Methods : Dialectic of the Middle Ages continued, but the lecture added.

New Subjects: The Seven Liberal Arts and the Three Philosophies of Aristotle. Social science and the liberal arts college, John of Salisbury.

- 5 -

The University During the Renaissance

To that facet of the Renaissance called "The Revival of Learning," the universities contributed little. In fact, medieval scholasticism continued in powerful control (that is, the method of dialectic) until external pressures forced it out.

The chief change came during the late Renaissance especially in England: a new clientele.

Morison has described this change.

Social science: little done and that little in the academies.

- 6 -

The Modern University

Social science developed chiefly in the German universities. Cite the American social scientists trained there.

English reforms 19th century.

- 7 -

The American University

1. Colonial Period: Nine colleges -- general education stressed; not theological schools! University of Pennsylvania the first to take the name of University 1778, present name 1791.

2. Period of Reconnaissance: 1789-1862

New structures appear to perform the specialized educational functions of the new technological society.

3. The Appearance of American Universities -- Period of Diversification:
 1862-1921:
 1862: Land Grant College Act.
 1876: Johns Hopkins -- influence on Harvard
 1880: Burgess at Columbia
 1892: Chicago: research stressed, the social sciences given status.
4. The Present: 1921 -- the junior college movement.

RETURN TO THE MATURATION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Conclusion

I have seven-league-booted over more than two millenia and hence have had to be superficial, but perhaps I've given at least a panoramic view of the development of higher education in the Western World. Such a view has utility, of course, to the extent that it illuminates present problems and directions. This brings me back to where I started -- the haven function.

I strongly believe that American colleges and universities are performing the haven function more effectively and successfully than any antecedent institutions -- ESPECIALLY FOR SOCIAL SCIENTISTS -- but that at the same time they are more completely than ever before serving the needs of the nation and a constantly growing proportion of its citizens. Such multifunctional activities make for exasperating conflicts, but in my belief we have the structural flexibility to resolve them. The task will perhaps be easier, however, if we support at least a few individuals to study universities as thoroughly as we now study the behavior of the Zuni Indians.

Colleges and universities are social institutions and hence those who study them might well be admitted to the company of social scientists. Perhaps the invitations extended to my University of California colleague, Professor McConnell, and myself to participate in this colloquium indicate a trend.